

## 8 Essential Facebook Rules for Teens

Facebook essentials to help your kids play it safe -- and smart.

Shira Lee Katz • September 12, 2013 • Categories: [Facebook advice](#)

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If [your teens are some of the millions on Facebook](#), it pays to start them off on the right foot. Using strict privacy settings is rule number one, and -- because Facebook updates its privacy policies often -- you and your teen should review privacy settings regularly.

Facebook [has recently run afoul of the FTC for proposing privacy changes that seem to grant the company wide use of user data](#). What will ultimately happen with that situation is still to be determined; in the meantime, our Facebook Essentials can help your kids with everything from securing their privacy to searching out summer internships.



### Facebook Essentials

**Keep private information private.** When filling out their profiles, teens can leave fields blank. The [only pieces of information needed](#) to create an account are their name, email address, and gender. There's no need for them to post their phone numbers or addresses.

**Stick with friends.** Have teens limit their privacy settings to Friends. That will restrict who sees their information, including pictures and videos. They also should indicate that only friends can look them up and message them.

**Get a handle on their info.** If teens don't restrict who can share their information, their personal data could end up in marketers' hands. Teens should be on the lookout for personal information requests -- like their birthday or music playlist -- from third parties. Suggest that they scan the ads that are served up to them on Facebook and notice how many relate to information in their profile.

**Pause before posting.** The Internet is teens' megaphone to the world. [Encourage them to consider](#) how what they do today will impact their reputation, their college and job prospects, their friendships, and their communities -- today, tomorrow, and 10 years from now. They should ask friends before tagging them in photos that could be embarrassing and hold back from saying things they wouldn't say to their faces.

**Hunt beyond friends' feeds.** News feeds from organizations or public figures can be a great source of knowledge. Teens can subscribe to individual feeds or search on general terms (poverty, engineering) by keywords as they research summer internships or learn more about causes they want to support.

**Groom their timeline.** Encourage teens to spruce up their timelines by hiding old posts or photos that might damage their reputation and highlighting choice achievements or opinions. It can be fun to update interests and movie tastes, too. Teens applying for summer internships or jobs can personalize their timeline by adding a favorite quotation or cover photo that speaks to their [work experience and academic interests](#).

**Use Facebook for homework.** Create a group for study buddies. Work on group projects together this way, or seek classmates' help with tough concepts or assignments. Some teachers even incorporate Facebook into homework, like creating mock paper Facebook bios to profile historical figures.

**Get feedback, give feedback.** It's fun to comment and "like" other people's posts. Encourage teens to [give support to others who are taking on big goals](#), like marathons, walks for a cause, and more. Facebook can also be a useful space to ask friends for recommendations (summer reading recs, best public tennis courts) or to put work out there for friends' feedback.

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As Common Sense Media's director of digital media, Shira is responsible for the strategic direction and operation of our app, website, and game channels -- including an innovative infrastructure...

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